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ABSTRACT

Australia's public elementary and secondary education system lacks a variety of types of schools, so some educational administration students are sent on field trips to study other school and nonschool organizations. One university, for example, sends its students to a hospital, private schools and colleges, and retail stores. Before the field trips, however, a theoretical understanding is needed of the differences and similarities between schools and other organizations. One of the most important of these characteristics concerns an organization's degree of control over the admission of clients and a client's degree of control over whether to participate in the organization. Under this criterion one can distinguish "wild" organizations, where both clients and organizations can choose, from "domesticated" organizations, in which neither clients nor organizations have a choice. The field trips are also preceded by study of systems theory, organizational openness, power and authority relationships, and Max Weber's concepts about bureaucracies. The trips help educational administration students expand their personal resources, acquire alternative points of view, and notice differences between school and nonschool management. (RW)

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A WALK ON THE WILD SIDE: FIELD TRIPS FOR THE EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATOR

Ross Telfer

Dr. Telfer argues that educational administrators stand to gain from informed first-hand personal analyses of organizations other than schools. Fieldwork of this kind should not aim to transplant practices into educational institutions, but rather enhance the capacity of the administrator to view his own organization from multiple perspectives.

THE PROBLEM

For the outback grazier who tried to claim stock depreciation on his hydraulic ram, the uncooperative taxation department was not acting in his best interests. But then, clients are undoubtedly the most vocal critics of organizations which are supposed to exist to serve people. Part of the educational process for administrators is the development of an ability to view their organizations from a variety of perspectives. How is it seen by the client, by others in the community, by those who work in it?

A new perspective frequently provides other alternatives to consider in problem-solving situations, and certainly brings other criteria to enable evaluations of strategies and results. Any means of overcoming narrow viewpoints and parochialism is one which administrators can exploit: especially educational administrators. The reasons are virtually cliches. Promotion in education systems in Australia is still largely dependent upon seniority. Most teachers will have begun training immediately after leaving high school. Most professional experience of those in promotions positions will have been gained in the system in which they have been promoted. These are familiar criticisms. The rejoinders are also familiar.

Administrators have not been promoted solely on teaching ability. Administrative ability can be evidenced, to a degree, in subordinate positions. Further, on-the-job experience provides a means by which administrators are trained in almost an apprenticeship. Principals and their deputies consciously develop staff by delegating decisions and allocating responsibilities. State departments of education have also provided a series of in-service courses for school executives.

But all of this training and education takes place WITHIN the education system. In terms of orientation, this is ideal. In terms of variety, flexibility, and innovation, it imposes unnecessary constraints.

A POSSIBLE SOLUTION

Compared to the range of types of schools found in the education systems of the U.S.A. and Britain, our state school systems are relatively homogeneous. We rarely have alternative schools, middle schools, senior high schools as options for pupils and parents. Such options may exist independently, but rarely within state systems. Our relatively centralised state systems certainly have the advantage of maintaining a uniform quality of education across dispersed populations: but while this prevents the disadvantaged communities suffering from a lack of equality of educational opportunity, it could also be

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preventing our state systems from attaining some of the height of achievement by exciting alternatives in education.

Such alternatives are conventionally introduced in teacher education and educational administration courses in tertiary institutions. Well over a decade ago, Professor Bill Walker introduced an interesting vacation component in the University of New England's post-graduate Diploma in Educational Administration: the compulsory visits to selected, non-educational organizations in Sydney.

This course component is crucial in the introductory course on educational administration in the Bachelor of Educational Studies at the University of Newcastle. A series of visits is made to organizations in the region, including (in 1979) a large public hospital, a Catholic high school, a Technical College, a large Woolworth's shopping centre, and a licensed sporting club. While there are predictable initial (and uninformed) reactions of some principals who are asked to sign leave forms, these are far from glorified school excursions. They are certainly not lots of fun and some time off work. In fact, the visits provide a concrete basis upon which to develop many abstractions encountered in administrative theory and research. (Incidentally, the visits are timed between 2 p.m. and 4 p.m. so that teachers can use lunch hours for travelling to the institutions. Leave is also restricted to half a day. The visits take place on a different day each week, at weekly intervals, to avoid absences at the same time each week).

THE RATIONALE

The starting point is a consideration of just what it is that makes a school or school system different from other organizations. A concise and informative differentiation is made by Hughes (1974).

1. Educational organizations have distinctive objectives as particular types of service organizations.
2. They have very close relationships with both a primary clientele (pupils) and a secondary clientele (parents).
3. While there are some exceptions, such as teacher training institutions in a time of teacher surplus, there is a lack of competition for clientele in the public sector.
4. The staff consists mainly of professionals who are given – and expect – a high degree of discretion in their work.
5. The school administrator faces different expectations: he has to be highly visible; easily accessible; and affectively related to the primary clientele. These expectations do not necessarily apply in other organizations.
6. The actual output of the educational organizations cannot be quantitatively evaluated in any meaningful manner.

This isolates some of the "adjectival" aspects of educational administration, but it also has many characteristics in common with the administration of a very wide variety of enterprises. For example, there is a division of labour; a need for co-ordination and direction; control of personnel (in recruitment, transfer, promotion, dismissals, and retirements); and the existence of goals and policies. Similarly, there are several common processes or activities such as decision-making, programming, communicating, and evaluating. Visits to non-educational organizations thus give an opportunity for analysis on two levels: (a) the degree to which the organization has similar design and function to an educational institution; and, (b) the degree to which the organization provides evidence of another "adjectival" form of administration.

In both instances, the "so what?" question is the ultimate test of observation, insight and analysis. In what way (or ways) can the visit provide something of value for the educational administrator? Before this crucial element is considered, let's return to Hughes' list of distinctive elements of educational organizations. His third point was that schools generally don't have to compete for their clients. This criterion was one used in the early sixties by Carlson (1964) who distinguished between four types of service organizations by using two criteria: firstly, whether or not the organization can select its clients; and, secondly, whether or not the client is legally required to participate in the organization.

Carlson's grid is provided below.

Client Control over Participation

Organizational Control over Client Admission		YES	NO
	YES	YES/YES Type I	YES/NO Type III
	NO	NO/YES Type II	NO/NO Type IV

Where do we find public schools? Pupils must attend school between specified ages in each of our states, and except for extremely rare cases (usually requiring the Minister's approval) schools cannot choose who their clients will be. Schools have some rather unfortunate associates, in the Type IV cell, in the form of prisons and mental institutions.

And what of the other types? In Type I organizations both clients and organizations can be selective; private nursing homes and independent schools, are examples. Type II organizations have no control over selection, but clients may choose; examples are evening colleges in state school systems and public hospitals. It is more difficult to find some Type III organizations, where the organization can select its clients but the client has to participate. Perhaps medical insurance companies, in a time of compulsory medical insurance, are examples.

The greatest contrast is between the Type I (Yes/Yes) and Type IV (No/No) organizations. Carlson termed the former "wild" organizations because they have to fight for survival. They go hunting for clients. They have to, because the clients may choose to wander off in response to a more enticing offer. Thus Type I organizations are very sensitive to environmental changes and pressures, and are capable of quick adaptations and rapid innovation in response to client demands.

Type IV organizations, however, Carlson labelled "domesticated" because they are regularly fed a batch of clients. Hughes' criteria (especially numbers 1, 2, 5 and 6) provide clues as to the reasons for such a situation. The roles of Type IV institutions are closely linked to the society they serve to protect and perpetuate. While society depends on these institutions for survival, the sheer fact of domestication carries implications about response to change and susceptibility to pressure. Suspicions about the relative insularity of Type IV organizations are reinforced when educational administrators are asked to make further analysis of the organizations they manage.

SOME THEORY

The systems approach provides a perspective which enables an administrator to see his role and responsibility as a key figure who affects the exchange between a school and its environment. Although, there are certainly theoretical aspects to such a system analysis and systems approach, it would be inaccurate to term it "systems theory" at this stage. A systems approach, as advocated by Immegart and Pilecki (1973), gives an analytic framework which forces an educational administrator to look at the situation in totality. The classic "black box" model of school organization includes all the inputs, processes (and controls), output, and the feedback from the output which subsequently affects both the process and the subsequent input.

A more detailed systems analysis of educational organization was made by Coombs (1969) who used a systems analysis to point to deficiencies in finance in world educational systems. To a certain extent, the control of inputs and the monitoring of outputs (with its implicit evaluation of process) has been a function of the larger education system to which schools belong. Increasingly, however, authority has been delegated to school levels for decisions about all phases of the system. The educational administrator now raises and lowers the gate on inputs, and while this control may not have the immediate consequences of his outback equivalent in charge of stock marking, the parallel (if not the metaphor) holds in terms of societal consequences.

The relative openness of Type I and Type IV organizations, when seen as systems, is a further contrast between wild and domesticated organizations. The boundaries between enterprise and society differ in size and effectiveness. Perceptions of ability to influence the operation by both employees and clients are quite different. This leads to a consideration of authority and power in educational organizations and others in the community.

Both power and authority are means of influencing others: but they can be distinguished by the legality of the influence gained through the exercise of authority. Authority is a result of formal position and status. Power is a means of influence which can be based entirely on informal and personal factors. The approach to a field study of organizations by Lutz and Iannoccone (1969) is centred on a study of power. For many school administrators used to the bureaucratic constraints in public systems, there is almost a need for the pilot's artificial horizon when the full implications of such an analysis are realised: for suddenly the traditional view has gone. Are decisions made in formal manner by those authorised to do so? Who actually exercises the power? How can the power of the work group be utilised towards goal attainment? Which interest groups in the community seek to exercise power on specific issues? Which pressure groups would work to the advantage of the school's objectives? How do other organizations respond to such questions and their implications?

A further contrast between wild organizations in the community and domesticated public schools is one of basic organization. The mere mention of "bureaucracy" is sufficient to evoke giggles from some. Before visiting other organizations, our group of administrators make a fairly detailed analysis of the criteria used by the German sociologist, Max Weber, to describe an ideal bureaucracy. Weber (1947) applied the following criteria to the appointment and function of administrators:

1. They are personally free and subject to authority only with respect to their impersonal official obligations.
2. They are organized in a clearly defined hierarchy of offices.
3. Each office has a clearly defined sphere of competence in the legal sense.
4. The office is filled by a free contractual relationship. Thus, in principle, there is free selection.

5. Candidates are selected on the basis of technical qualifications. In the most rational case, this is tested by examination or guaranteed by diplomas certifying technical training, or both. They are *appointed*, not elected.

6. They are remunerated by fixed salaries in money, for the most part with a right to pensions. Only under certain circumstances does the employing authority, especially in private organizations, have a right to terminate the appointment, but the official is always free to resign. The salary scale is primarily graded according to rank in the hierarchy; but in addition to this criterion, the responsibility of the position and the requirements of the incumbent's social status may be taken into account.

7. The office is treated as a sole, or at least the primary, occupation of the incumbent.

8. It constitutes a career. There is a system of 'promotion' according to seniority or to achievement, or both. Promotion is dependent on the judgment of superiors.

9. The official works entirely separated from ownership of the means of administration and without appropriation of his position.

10. He is subject to strict and systematic discipline and control in the conduct of the office.

These criteria have been applied, by a number of writers, to Australian education systems. It's a relatively simple matter to go through the list and check on the bureaucratic nature of the organization in which one works. The next step is to consider the consequences of bureaucratization in both positive and negative terms, which is done very effectively, by Owens (1970). Visitors to organizations can then seek means of capitalising on the advantages of bureaucratization (such as predictability, efficiency, speed and impersonality) and solutions of the problems of overconformity, "organization men", inertia which hampers innovation, downward rather than multidirectional communication, and a lack of consideration of personal needs as opposed to organizational demands. Thus a search for alternatives to "the traditional bureaucratic form of organization and associated managerial practices in Australia", as described by Lansbury and Gilmour (1977), is a major purpose in our walks on the wild side.

CONCLUSION

It is now impossible to avoid the "so what?" test. What do educational administrators get out of visits to other organizations? First, their personal resources are extended in the experience and knowledge gained by the opportunity to move about in the community in which they work. Visits to jails, hospitals and private enterprise and discussions with people involved are important components of an administrator's personal experience. Secondly, the common aspects of administration (communication, planning, budgeting, and so on) provide insights into alternative viewpoints and other methods. If the first gain was personal, this one is professional. Thirdly, the educational administrator becomes more conscious of the special ways in which his role differs from the management of other enterprises. This perspective enables him to make future priorities from an established philosophy which should provide a greater degree of consistency. And for the rest? Go for a walk on the wild side and find out.

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